

Message Text

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FOR ASSIST ANT SECRETARY HABIB

FOL REPEAT BANGKOK 3889 SENT ACTION SECSTATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 3889

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, MARR, MILI, TH

SUBJ: U.S. MILITARY IN THAILAND: BACKGROUND AND COMMENT

ON NATION STORY AND EDITORIAL

REF: BANGKOK 3729

1. RELIABLE NEWS SOURCE TOLD US THAT THE NATION EDITOR
SUTHICHA YOON SPENT FOUR HOURS WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY
UNDER SECRETARY ANAN PANYARACHUN GATHERING MATERIAL
THAT APPEARED IN ARTICLE REPORTED REFTEL.

2. SOURCE SAID ANAN'S MAJOR OBJECTIVE SEEMED TO BE
TO CREATE AN APPEARANCE OF CONFLICT IN U.S.-THAI
DISCUSSION CONCERNING RESIDUAL AND FEB 4 MEETING AT
WHICH THAI DELIVERED PRINCIPLES. HE ADDED THAT ANAN,
WHO IS OUT OF TOWN, HAD DELEGATED TO WORAPHUT CHAIYANAM,
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CHIEF, AMERICA DIVISION, MFA, THE EFFORT TO KEEP STORY

SIMMERING IN PUBLIC UNTIL U.S. REPLIES TO THAI
"DEMANDS."

3. AMERICAN NEWSMAN TOLD US THAT IN CONVERSATION
YESTERDAY, FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN NITSAI
WETCHACHIWA DESCRIBED FEB. 4 MEETING. AMERICANS,
HE SAID, PUT FORWARD WHAT THEY WANT TO KEEP IN
THAILAND -- EMPHASIZING THAT IT WAS U.S. WHO WANTED
CERTAIN FUNCTIONS TO REMAIN HERE -- AND THAT THAI
COUNTERED WITH TOUGH PROPOSALS WHICH U.S. MUST MEET
BEFORE RTG WILL CONSIDER ALLOWING THOSE DESIRED
FUNCTIONS TO REMAIN. UP TO NOW, NITSAI HAS STAYED
AWAY FROM THIS DEVELOPING STORY. INITIALLY, HE WAS
RELUCTANT TO TALK WITH THE AMERICAN NEWSMAN, WHO
SOUGHT OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION FROM RTG THAT THE
NATION ARTICLE IN REFTEL WAS CORRECT. REPORTEDLY,
NITSAI TOLD NEWSMAN THAT HE COULD NOT CONFIRM STORY
BUT "WOULD CHECK AROUND" THE MINISTRY TO SEE IF IT
WERE TRUE. LATER, HE CALLED NEWSMAN AND VOLUNTEERED
WHAT REPORTER SAID WAS "HARSH VERSION."

4. CLEARLY, ANAN IS INITIATOR OF PERSISTENT EFFORT
TO SURFACE IN LOCAL PRESS SELF-SERVING VERSION OF
FEB. 4 MEETING AND, THROUGH WORAPHUT, HAS SPREAD
THAT EFFORT TO U.S. NEWSMEN. ANAN AND WORAPHUT
MADE POINTS SIMILAR TO NATION STORY WITH CHRISTIAN
SCIENCE MONITOR AND NEW YORK TIMES.

5. WE WISH IN PARTICULAR TO FLAG ONE ASPECT OF
THE CONTENT OF THE NEWS STORY AND EDITORIAL INSPIRED
BY ANAN: THEY BOTH CARRIED A STRONG IMPLICATION THAT
THE U.S. IS DRAGGING ITS FEET ABOUT PROVIDING
INFORMATION TO THE THAI AND RESPONDING TO THEIR
PROPOSALS, PARTICULARLY ON THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES.
THIS, OF COURSE, REPRESENTS A DISTORTION OF WHAT
WE HAVE BEEN SAYING AND DOING HERE, BUT WE WANT
TO AVOID GIVING IT ANY COLOR OF ACCURACY. IT
THEREFORE BECOMES IMPORTANT THAT WE PROMPTLY RECEIVE
THE DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS AS TO HOW WE SHOULD
REPLY TO THE THAI ON THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES.
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